

The Macedonian Question and the Guerrilla War in Northern Greece on the Eve of the Truman Doctrine

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On the eve of the promulgation of the Truman Doctrine, the policy makers in the U.S. State Department were acutely aware that the main theater of the insurrection in Greece was along the mountainous northern border, primarily in Macedonia and Thrace (Jones 68). From the spring of 1946 through the summer of 1947, they characterized the fighting in northern Greece as a bid for Macedonian autonomy, in which guerrilla armies comprised largely of Slavic separatists were provided material aid and sanctuary by Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania (DRE-OIR, *IR 1175.163 23*).¹ According to an intelligence report issued in mid-1947 by the U.S. State Department's Division of Research for Europe, the Office of Intelligence and Research (DRE-OIR), the insurrection was dominated by Macedonian separatists even after the Greek communist party (KKE) assumed an active role in directing the fighting in late 1946 (DRE-OIR, *IR 1175-170*). The figures are telling: at the height of the civil war, U.S. analysts estimated that less than 20 percent of the guerrillas were members of the KKE, while over half were Slavs, mostly from Macedonia (*IR 4909.4*).

This, of course, comes as no surprise to the historian con-

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cerned with the origins of the Cold War: President Harry S. Truman spoke of the insurrection in northern Greece during his historic speech on March 12, 1947, and Dean Acheson remembered that the genesis of the guerrilla campaign was an effort by Yugoslavia and Bulgaria to detach Greece's northern provinces (Acheson 195). But Acheson—long after the events and in a spirit of self-justification—also recalled that the insurrection was just one component in a larger Soviet plan to seize power in all of Greece (Acheson 196, 199)! Was this really the case? And did policy makers lend credence to such ideologically charged claims? This paper seeks to partially answer these questions by assembling a composite picture of contemporary OSS and State Department intelligence assessments of the external threat to Greece from 1944-1947.

The Macedonian Question and the Problem of Borders

The analysts in the State Department viewed the guerrilla campaign in northern Greece against the historical background of the Macedonian question. The nationality of the peoples inhabiting Macedonia is a nearly ancient dilemma, with its modern expression in competing Greek and Serbian claims to the Balkan territories once controlled by the Ottoman Turks (King 187-219). Following World War I, both of these young Balkan nations, eager to expand their borders, claimed ethnic affinity to the inhabitants of Macedonia. Moreover, much to the frustration of the U.S. officials seeking to resolve the border disputes that arose following the liberation of the Balkans in 1944, there was a case to be made for both sets of claims on purely ethnographic grounds. Indeed, as an OSS summary of the problem put it, the Macedonian region had historically been the "melting pot" of the Balkans, inhabited at one time or another by Greeks, Serbs, Bulgars, Albanians, Vlachs, Jews, and South Slavs (*R&A* 2685 2-3). This report concluded that the Macedonians lacked anything resembling a national self-consciousness, let alone a sense that they were the guardians of a distinctive culture, until one was cultivated by the heated border debates of the nineteenth century.

Nevertheless, it was Bulgaria, while still under Turkish rule, that had the most impact on the developing Macedonian sense of nationality. A Bulgarian Exarchate established in 1870 exercised jurisdiction over all of Macedonia, and this territory was included in the newly independent Bulgarian state by the Treaty of San Stefano in 1878. The fact that this treaty was immediately nullified, and Bulgaria restored to Turkish rule, by the Congress of Berlin did nothing to cool the ardor of Bulgarian nationalism, and the restoration of a Bulgar state to encompass the San Stefano borders became something of a national quest. During this time, an Independent Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO) coalesced to struggle for an autonomous Macedonia, although eventually this organization allied itself with Bulgaria and the San Stefano precepts in a defensive move to secure itself against the competing territorial claims of the Turks, the Greeks and the Serbs (DRE-OIR, IR 1175.163).

While Bulgaria gained its independence during the Balkan wars of 1912-13, subsequent fighting with Greece and Serbia cost the new nation control over much of the disputed territory in Macedonia. The Paris Peace Conference following World War I formally divided Macedonia between Bulgaria, Greece, and the newly formed state of Yugoslavia. The region under Yugoslav control was labelled Vardar Macedonia, while that under Greek control was called Aegean Macedonia, and Pirin Macedonia remained under Bulgarian sovereignty. The Greek government employed harsh measures to consolidate its control over the newly acquired Macedonian regions: mass deportations of Slavs were undertaken in the 1920s, and hundreds of thousands of Greek-speaking refugees uprooted by the Turkish fiasco were settled in their place. By the 1928 census, the Greek population of Aegean Macedonia was 1.4 million, while the official tally of Slavs was a mere 82,000 (DRE-OIR, IR 1175.166).

The Comintern invested a considerable amount of effort into cultivating a coalition of radical leftist organizations in Macedonia during the early 1920s (OSS, R&A 2685 3-4). The region, given the diversity of its population and the complexity of its interconnections with its Balkan neighbors, was an ideal

breeding ground for internationalist approaches to politics. Under the auspices of the Third International, a Balkan Communist Federation emerged to work toward a federation of Balkan states, under which Macedonia would become a semi-autonomous political unit. This movement found a ready ally in the radical Agrarian Party and a variety of peasants' parties, which were seeking to create a Green International movement to support the political objective of a unified East European agrarian state (OSS, *R&A* 2685 3). This same effort, however, caused a severe crisis in the KKE in 1922-23; the Comintern instructed Greek communists, many of whom were fiercely nationalistic, to advocate an autonomous Macedonian state to be comprised, in part, of Greek territory. Although the Comintern brought the nationalist elements within the KKE into line by opening a bureau in Salonika and intervening in the 1923 and 1924 elections of the Central Committee of the KKE, it was ultimately forced to abandon the slogan of Macedonian autonomy in 1935 (DRE-OIR, "Summary" 2-4).

While the Macedonian leftist groups were largely suppressed in the 1930s, several re-emerged during the Axis occupation to join the resistance movement. A particularly prominent partisan group was the Slavic Popular Liberation Front (SNOF), which, according to a State Department intelligence analyst, had been formed by the KKE as a countermeasure to Yugoslavian propaganda and recruitment efforts targeted at the Slavic population of Aegean Macedonia (DRE-OIR, "Summary" 2). This was, however, a stormy alliance, due largely to the profound ideological dispute over the proper disposition of Macedonia after the war. While the SNOF openly advocated Macedonian autonomy, and began talks with Tito's Anti-Fascist Council of Yugoslavia in late 1943 to explore the possibility of an enlarged Macedonia entering the proposed Yugoslav federation, the idea of Macedonian autonomy remained an anathema to nationalist elements within the KKE (OSS, *R&A* 2685 5). Indeed, faced in 1944 with the specter of the creation of a Macedonian communist party under Tito's aegis, a regional committee of the KKE denounced such a move as both "anti-social" and anti-national (DRE-OIR, "Summary" 4).

So sensitive and potentially divisive was the issue of Mace-

donian autonomy, that the Germans routinely employed it in their political warfare against the Greek partisans, at one point disseminating the so-called "Petrich Agreement" between Greek and Bulgarian communists which mandated the creation of an autonomous Macedonian state from the territories of both signatory nations (OSS, *R&A* 2685 17). This devious attempt to discredit the EAM/ELAS was countered only after determined efforts on the part of British and American intelligence officers to prove the agreement a forgery. Nevertheless, after three open rebellions against the EAM leadership, the SNOF ultimately repudiated the EAM/ELAS in order to realign itself with Tito's forces. By the fall of 1944, the ENOF had joined the communist partisan leadership in Yugoslavia, Albania and Bulgaria in calling for a post-war Balkans federation.

The euphoric but chaotic events surrounding the liberation of the Balkans in 1944 thrust Macedonia before the attention of the Allied powers, as the first tentative, but nonetheless tangible, steps were now taken toward the creation of a unified and autonomous Macedonian republic. On August 2, 1944, some 125 Vardar Macedonians met at Bitoly, proclaiming themselves to be Macedonia's National Assembly, joined the Yugoslavian Federation. Two months later, on October 26, this same body called for all Macedonians—Greek, Bulgar and Slav—to arise together and expel the Germans in order to establish a unified Macedonia. This last event was received by Western observers with a particular sense of foreboding, since just two days earlier the commander-in-chief of the Macedonian partisan forces had told an OSS liaison officer that the unification of Macedonia was certain, and that its borders would encompass Salonika and the remainder of Aegean Macedonia as far east the Mesta/Nestos River (OSS, *R&A* 2685 5, 8, 13).

An active measure to support such a vision was, indeed, implemented several days later, in early November 1944, as nearly 300 Macedonian partisans met on Greek territory to create a "Youth Union for Macedonian Liberation" (OSS, *R&A* 2685 13). This talk of Macedonian reunification was not merely hopeful but baseless rhetoric. The newly emerged Fatherland Front in Bulgaria not only relinquished its historic claims to Vardar Macedonia, but actually hailed the birth of the Mace-

donian Federal Republic with genuine enthusiasm. Not long after signing a military cooperation pact with Yugoslavia on October 5, Premier Georgi Dimitrov committed Bulgaria to a policy of fraternal cooperation and close relations with all the South Slavs (OSS, *R&A* 2685 5). Negotiations on the union of Pirin and Vardar Macedonia were apparently held in Sofia, beginning during the winter of 1944-1945 (DRE-OIR, *IR* 1175.95). The OSS analysts studying the situation duly noted that there was a strong element of opposition to the loss of any Bulgarian territory on the part of nationalist factions within the Fatherland Front. Indeed, as events proved, despite support for the union from such luminaries as Georgi Dimitrov, negotiations continually stalled until the Tito-Cominform split, at which point the issue was permanently shelved (King 57ff.).

These developments were noted with alarm by the Anglo-American powers, especially in light of the presence of the Red Army in Bulgaria, and the communist domination of the partisan movements in Yugoslavia and Macedonia. The British and Americans speculated that the Soviets might use the issue of Macedonian autonomy as cover for a push to gain access to the Aegean Sea. This suspicion was reinforced when the Red Army allowed Bulgarian occupation forces to remain in northern Greece for some five weeks following the liberation. Although these forces were ultimately withdrawn, the delay was widely interpreted as a signal of support for Bulgarian aspirations for an Aegean port. Even after the retirement of the Bulgarian troops from Aegean Macedonia and Thrace, Sofia radio, under Russian supervision, continued to broadcast a steady stream of propaganda calling for the unification of the Aegean, Pirin and Vardar regions of Macedonia, to include the port facilities at Salonika (OSS, *R&A* 2685 19). Thus, a good half-year before the Russians began applying pressure to Turkey over the Straits, the prospect of Soviet access to the eastern Mediterranean was raised by events in Greece and the Balkans.

It was developments such as these that Churchill hoped to arrest with the negotiation of the so-called "Percentages Agreement" with Stalin in October (Pirjevec 85-87). Whether or not Stalin felt obliged to honor this document is debatable, although Milovan Djilas suggests that he did (104; Keylor 205; Ruben-

stein 58). The OSS was a bit more skeptical of Stalin's good intentions, however, especially in regards to the possibility of incorporating Salonika into the Soviet sphere of influence by means of an enlarged Macedonian state federated with either Yugoslavia or Bulgaria. Indeed, the momentum of developments seemed to favor Stalin; an OSS report of December 6, 1944, treating the Macedonian question and the prospect of a Balkan federation, concluded that direct Soviet intervention was both unlikely and unnecessary, as events were proceeding advantageously of their own accord (R&A 2685 19).

Nevertheless, the pace of activities slowed measurably in early 1945, at least in part owing to the inherent difficulties of negotiating a consensus on federation. Yugoslavia, in particular, took active steps to bring this volatile issue under control. For example, a number of young Macedonian partisans staged a demonstration in Skopje on January 5, 1945, to demand an immediate offensive to seize Salonika, and were promptly sentenced to death. Such efforts as this to clamp down on those activities of Macedonian separatists which threatened Greek territory were noted with appreciation by analysts in the State Department (DRE-OIR, IR 1175.163).

But the prospect of federation, and the territorial threat it might pose to Greek Macedonia, continued to haunt both Greece and the Anglo-American powers. In April 1945, reports began to arrive in Washington that the union of Pirin and Vardar Macedonia had been agreed to in principal by Sofia and Belgrade, although the implementation of the agreement would need to await the advent of more propitious international circumstances (OSS, FM 223). That same month, the Macedonian-American newspaper *Makedonska Tribuna* began a vigorous editorial campaign in support of an autonomous Macedonia aligned with Tito's Yugoslavia. The content of this Macedonian-American propaganda concerned the OSS analysts immensely, as the paper reopened the issue of Aegean Macedonia with gusto, insisting at one point that "a South Slav federation must at all costs have an exit on the Aegean, and this without the inclusion of Greek Macedonia cannot be realized" (Vlanton 93).

The stage for the outbreak of a border conflict between

Greece and her neighbors to the north was set in the spring and summer of 1946, in the course of the diplomatic squabbles regarding frontier revisions that occurred as a precursor to the negotiation of peace settlements with Bulgaria and Albania. The complexities of this issue need not detain us; an idea of the magnitude and effrontery involved in these disputes may be gleaned from the fact that in April the Greek government submitted a note to the Council of Foreign Ministers and the State Department advancing a claim to some 27 percent of Albania's territory (Lagoudakis, Letter)! That several of the more provocative portions of this territorial claim were published in *The New York Times* on April 29, did little to ease the escalating sense of crisis in the Balkans. Similarly, the Greeks laid claim to cover 6,000 square miles of Bulgarian territory centered around the town of Dobroudja (OCL-3523.19 10). Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania all responded with a panoply of claims on Greek territory, and Yugoslavia filed a complaint on July 19 that the Greeks were engaging in a campaign of persecution targeted against the Slavs living in Aegean Macedonia. This latter charge prompted State Department officials to reassure the Greek Ambassador on August 1, 1946, that although the U.S. government was willing to investigate these charges, it both fully supported Greek sovereignty over Aegean Macedonia, and rejected the right of Yugoslavia to concern itself with the affairs of Greek nationals of Slavic descent (Henderson, Letter).

This issue did not abate, however, and on August 24, 1946, it assumed the overtones of a dispute between the Soviets and the Anglo-Americans when the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic filed a complaint with the United Nations Security Council, under Article 34 of the UNO Charter, that the policy of the Greek government was endangering international peace and security (SD/S/766). This complaint contained numerous particulars, to include a resurrection of the Soviet objection to the presence of British troops in Greece, as well as a specific accusation of Greek persecution of the Macedonian minority population. Polarized as it was along East-West lines, this complaint was tabled without resolution after 14 meetings of the Security Council. Nonetheless, the issue heightened a sense of awareness

in the State Department of the unstable situation on Greece's northern frontiers.

It was this growing awareness of the potential crisis in the Balkans, exacerbated by the East-West diplomatic feud already simmering over the Middle East, which forced the State Department to embark upon a review of its Greek policy, and generally moved the United States a step closer to the sort of full-scale commitment embodied in the Truman Doctrine. Although fully supportive of Greek independence and territorial integrity, the United States would have nothing to do with the aggressive revision of borders being advocated by the government in Athens. To a great extent, this rejection of most of Greece's more ambitious territorial claims was fueled by a general anger and disgust over the untimely adoption of such expansionary policies by the Tsaldaris regime (Acheson 199). But, in part, the rejection of Greek territorial claims was based on a careful, post-war study by the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the military implications of the proposed borders (SM-5555). This study concluded that not only would such borders prove indefensible, but that the acquisition of the disputed territories would drive Albania even closer to Yugoslavia, and provoke an eruption of guerrilla warfare. That is, maintaining the status quo was to be the key to preserving a tenuous stability in the region.

The Macedonian issue became the focal point of a joint political effort launched by the South Balkan states against Greece in the spring of 1946, and pursued with gradually increasing pressure throughout the summer and autumn. The future union of Macedonia was firmly established as the policy of both Bulgaria and Yugoslavia by mid-August, when the Bulgarian communist party passed a secret resolution at its Tenth Plenum to join Pirin Macedonia to the Peoples' Republic of Macedonia (King 65). With the thorny issue of the union of Pirin and Vardar Macedonia apparently settled, Aegean Macedonia became the object of a renewed propaganda campaign coordinated with a covert military assault. An ominous foreshadowing of this campaign appeared in a *London Times* article August 19, 1946, which reported that, in May, a secret meeting had been held in Gorni, Bulgaria, between the Bulgarian and Yugoslav governments as well as Greek communists to discuss

the forced separation of Aegean Macedonia from Greece (Jones 67-68). Whether or not that particular report was based on accurate information, it certainly reflected the suspicions of the Greeks.

Confirmation of such suspicions seemed to come in the fall, as both Bulgaria and Yugoslavia intensified the rhetoric of their press campaigns against Greek control of Aegean Macedonia. On October 10, 1946, Belgrade's Radio Tanjug reported that at a meeting of Macedonian communists held at Razlog, a Bulgarian minister without portfolio had declared that the Fatherland Front of Bulgaria was prepared to assist in the unification of the Macedonian peoples under the aegis of the Peoples' Republic of Macedonia (DRE-OIR, IR1175.163). These comments were matched by the provocative statement in the Yugoslav communist party newspaper *Rabotničko Delo* on November 16 that the unification of all three regions of Macedonia could take place only under the auspices of the Yugoslav Federation.

Even more jingoist lines were taken up with the foreign press. State Department analysts noted with some concern that Dimitar Vlahov, the president of the Macedonian National Front, and vice-president in the Federal Yugoslav Assembly, as well as a delegate to the Paris Peace Conferences, declared in a press interview in Paris on September 18 that Greece had no valid claim to Aegean Macedonia and that the political union of all the regions of Macedonia as a Yugoslav republic would surely occur (DRE-OIR, IR 1175.166). But if there were any doubts regarding Yugoslavia's intentions toward Greek Macedonia, they should have been dispelled by Marshal Tito's interview with C. L. Sulzberger for *The New York Times* on October 14, 1946, in which the Yugoslav leader explained that his government was planning to take certain actions before the United Nations to halt the alleged persecution of Slavs living in Aegean Macedonia by the Greek government and pro-monarchical terrorists. Such harsh words clearly served notice to the international community that Yugoslavia was prepared to take an active interest in Greek internal affairs in support of the Macedonian separatist cause. The State Department certainly judged from this sort of jingoism that Yugoslav policy aimed at nothing less than the out-

right annexation of Greek Macedonia (DRE-OIR, *IR 1175.166*; Acheson 195, 199).

At roughly the same time that this propaganda campaign was unfolding, the inhabitants of Pirin Macedonia were openly encouraged to register themselves with the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior—not as Bulgars, but as Macedonians. This campaign was a notable success: according to State Department reports, up to 70 percent of the inhabitants of Pirin Macedonia declared themselves to be Macedonian (DRE-OIR, *IR 1175.163*). These efforts to whip up feelings of Macedonian nationalism were complemented by a deliberate effort to polarize the resulting separatist energies toward support of the proposed incorporation of a unified Macedonian Republic into the communist Yugoslav Federation. In June 1946, just prior to the inception of the new propaganda campaign, some 6,000 members of the anti-communist IMRO were arrested in Bulgaria, and in early November, Yugoslavia began arresting and executing Macedonian separatists suspected of harboring Anglo-American sympathies (DRE-OIR, *IR 1175.166*). In short, the Yugoslav and Bulgarian governments were fully assuming the political direction of the Macedonian nationalist movement, while ruthlessly eliminating any potential rivalry for leadership.

The Outbreak of the Guerrilla War

While these political actions were unfolding, guerrillas operating out of bases in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania began staging raids on targets in northern Greece. This warfare, soon generalized by journalists and historians as the "Third Round" of the Greek Civil War, began on the night of March 30-31, 1946, when a band of guerrillas protested the elections the following day by staging a raid on the town of Litokhoro on the eastern slope of Mount Olympus (DRE-OIR, "Working Notes"). Significantly, this guerrilla band, commanded by a Captain Ypsilantis, had infiltrated from, and then fled back to, Yugoslav territory. Several other attacks occurred over the spring and summer, most notably an attack in July on a company of the Greek National Army stationed at Pondokerasia.

But the pace and scope of these raids were relatively modest, and as late as November the State Department was rather skeptical about Greek claims of significant cross-border attacks. One report, in summarizing a speech Tsaldaris gave at Salonika, reiterated the Greek complaints of Bulgarian support for guerrillas, but concluded that there was little evidence that guerrilla bands were operating out of bases in Bulgaria (*OCL-3523.19 11*).

In response to such skepticism, the Greek government carefully compiled evidence of the growing guerrilla threat, and then presented the dossier to the Secretary General of the United Nations on December 3, 1946 (*SD/S/203*). Backed up with a plethora of exhaustively documented testimony, which was derived primarily from the interrogation of captured and suspected guerrillas, the Greek delegate to the UN persuasively complained of a campaign of covert aggression conducted against Greece by her Balkan neighbors. The results of this Greek complaint were nothing less than sensational; after hearing the Greeks, as well as entertaining responses and counter-complaints from the Yugoslavs, Bulgarians and Albanians, the Security Council voted unanimously to immediately dispatch a commission to investigate the border situation between Greece and her neighbors (*SD/S/809*).

In retrospect, the Soviet vote for the establishment of this investigative committee seems somewhat surprising. Steven Xydis suggests that the Soviets sensed that the British were already attempting to shift the burden of patronizing Greece to the United States, and were thus determined to avoid providing any plausible condition for unilateral American action (8-9). A Soviet veto, then, might have provided the Americans with the grounds to develop the argument that, owing directly to communist-led intransigence, a deadlocked UN would be unable to resolve an important threat to world peace. Indeed, the Soviet delegate to the Security Council bluntly hinted that Soviet support for the UN investigative committee was predicated on an American policy of non-intervention with regard to Greece (*SD/S/809*). This was, of course, a grave miscalculation on the part of the Soviets, and their support of UN efforts in Greece and the Balkans evaporated with the advent of direct American aid to Greece.

The documentation supporting the Greek government's complaint was significant and productive in another sense as well. We should note that the Truman Doctrine was promulgated long before the Commission of Investigation Concerning Greek Frontier Incidents issued its final report on June 27, 1947. In the absence of any such independent documentation, it would seem that the threat assessments that supported the State Department policy formulation during those critical weeks in February and March of 1947 relied more or less directly on the intelligence provided by the Greek government.

Who were these guerrillas based in the communist Balkan states? How were they organized, and what was their political orientation? Did they indeed receive any substantial support from Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania? Over the course of the insurrection a fairly accurate picture of the guerrilla movement was developed using normal field intelligence techniques, most frequently the interrogation of prisoners. Indeed, with 15 percent of the rank and file of the guerrilla forces surrendering in 1946, and 20 percent in 1947, it was a relatively simple matter for the Greek National Army and its American advisors to ascertain and corroborate accurate information regarding the tactical and operational details of the insurrection (*IR 4909.4*).

The U.S. was aware that a large number of ELAS partisans—as many as 5,000, according to the Greek government—had fled to Yugoslavia in the weeks following the Varkiza Agreement in 1945 (*DRE-OIR, IR 1175.166*; US Army, *ATIB 13-49 6*). Albania and Bulgaria, which as Axis powers had participated in the occupation of Greece, received far fewer former ELAS members. We should not overvalue this flight of the ELAS into Yugoslavia as evidence of any early plans on the part of the Yugoslavs to launch a guerrilla war against Greece. Tito, who had sound ideological reasons to sympathize with the ELAS fugitives, was still faced with the pragmatic problem of accommodating and controlling a large body of armed foreigners. According to the State Department assessment of the evolving guerrilla threat, the leadership of the ELAS refugees negotiated an agreement with the Yugoslavs in June 1945, under which the majority of the former Greek partisans was concentrated in a camp at Bulkjes (*DRE-OIR, "Working Notes"*). The follow-

ing month, the Albanian government in Tirana authorized the recruiting of Greek ex-partisans, and in October transferred over 300 ELAS refugees from a camp in Rubinis to Bulkjes, suggesting that the communist Balkan states sought a common solution to managing the current problem—but potential resource—of their former partisan allies (DRE-OIR, IR 1175.166). For the next half-year, Bulkjes was in actuality little more than one among dozens of refugee camps housing the masses of displaced persons produced by the Second World War and the subsequent political turmoil, although its inmates were marked by an unusual level of para-military organization and training that could alternately prove to be an asset or a liability for their Yugoslav hosts. Indeed, while many of these ELAS partisans eventually returned to Greece as guerrillas, many more seem to have been put to work repairing railway lines and other war-damaged assets of the Yugoslav infrastructure (SD/S/203; OIR 4487).

Another 2,000-3,000 Slavic-speaking Greeks from Macedonia, who had formerly belonged to the SNOF battalions commanded by Elias Demakis (aka. Gotchev), also fled to Yugoslavia after the war, where they received somewhat better treatment than the ELAS refugees. According to State Department estimates, some of these SNOF soldiers were grouped into small detachments and assigned to Yugoslav Army units stationed in Macedonia (SD/S/809; DRE-OIR, IR 1175.170). Others were apparently concentrated at refugee camps, principally those at Skopje, Bulkjes, and Monastir (SD/S/809).

In the meantime, the People's Front of Macedonia began reorganizing the separatist movement in Greek Macedonia along Communist Party lines. The organization chosen as an agent in this effort was the National Liberation Front (NOF), covertly headquartered at Skopje. This group was thought to be a direct descendent of the wartime SNOF. Indeed, according to the Greek complaint of December 3, 1946, many of the former SNOF soldiers serving in the Yugoslav army were re-mobilized as partisans under the NOF banner (SD/S/809). Lest we become confused by the fact that the KKE only recognized the NOF in January of 1948, at which time it was incorporated into the Provisional Democratic Government (DRE-OIR, "Summary" 6-7), we should recall that the EAM/ELAS and the SNOF

split violently during the Nazi Occupation over the very issue of Macedonian autonomy. Although the NOF and the KKE/DSE cooperated in the guerrilla war from the fall of 1946 and on, the official KKE propaganda line continued to vehemently oppose Macedonian autonomy (DRE-OIR, *IR 1175.170*). The formal reconciliation of the KKE and the NOF in early 1948 must be viewed as a means by which Tito tacitly demonstrated support for the Markos government. Conversely, the available evidence suggests that even at that point the KKE was reluctant to accept the NOF into the Provisional Democratic Government, and did so only under intense pressure from Tito. Indeed, when the KKE began to adopt a more flexible policy regarding Macedonian union in February 1948, the Party was immediately rent by a split along the old nationalist-internationalist lines once again (DRE-OIR, "Summary" 6-8).

NOF officers began infiltrating into Greece as early as October 1945, with the primary mission of recruiting members and building a party organization (*SD/S/809*; DRE-OIR, *IR 1175.170*). According to the Greek government's complaint of December 3, an NOF headquarters was established in Edessa, and cells were created at Karydia, Coryfi, Sarakeni, Margarita, and Lyki (*SD/S/203*). Recruiting missions continued—indeed, grew bolder in the openness with which they were conducted—over the next year. For example, in May 1946, an armed band of 15 NOF guerrillas infiltrated from Yugoslavia to Zivonia, where it briefly took over the Zivonia Lignite Mine and attempted to indoctrinate the miners (*SD/S/203*). Other recruiting efforts were targeted at Slavic-speaking Greek refugees in Yugoslavia. A particularly lucrative source of recruits for the NOF was the sprawling refugee camp at Monastir. Regular meetings were held there by the NOF, during which the participants were urged to return to Greece to help liberate Aegean Macedonia. The NOF recruits were formed into small bands and given guerrilla training at such camps as Bulkjes (where over 500 NOF guerrillas were stationed in 1946), Skopje and Monastir, while still others were trained at Belogradchik and Tulov in Bulgaria (*SD/S/203*). These recruiting efforts seem to have been modestly successful; by mid-1947, the State De-

partment estimated that the NOF could field 2,500-3,000 guerrillas (DRE-OIR, *IR 1175.170*).

The decision to mobilize in preparation for a guerrilla campaign in northern Greece appears to have been taken by Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania, in coordination with at least some cadres of the KKE, by March 1946 (DRE-OIR, "Working Notes"). In that month, the ELAS refugees at Bulkjes began to enjoy a refreshing change in treatment at the hands of their Yugoslav hosts. New uniforms, of American gaberdine, and new Yugoslav-made boots were issued. The community of ex-partisans was remobilized, with all those fit and willing being formed into companies of 50-80 men each. In April, a school was opened to train officers, with most of the cadets being selected from among the ranks of the communist youth organization (EPON) of the camp. Shortly thereafter, the companies were organized into battalion-sized formations, each consisting of three companies and going under such designations as the "Zachariades" and "EPON" brigades (*SD/S/203*; DRE-OIR, "Working Notes").

In the meantime, liaison was established between Bulkjes and the EAM Self Defense Organizations operating in Greece, and "free areas" were established along the frontier to facilitate cross-border movement and resupply. The EAM began, as well, to erect a command and control system to support the guerrilla units as they moved through Greek territory. Area headquarters were established in eastern Macedonia and Thrace in March, and in Thessaly in April (DRE-OIR, "Working Notes"). The pace of mobilization quickened after a series of high-level meetings between the KKE and the communist parties of Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania in June and July (Smith 53-56). Over the next five months, area headquarters were established in western and central Macedonia, the Peloponnese, Epirus and Roumeli (DRE-OIR "Working Notes"). The guerrilla movement gained the aura of a Greek-led insurrection in October, when a general headquarters was established under Markos Vafiadis at Distraton, near Mt. Smolika (DRE-OIR, *IR 1175.170*). Finally, it was at Distraton that the ELAS was reconstituted as the DSE in December 1946.

While the scope of guerrilla operations remained com-

paratively modest until the summer of 1947, a pattern of active support of the guerrillas by the regimes in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania quickly emerged. The Greek government complained that guerrillas trained at Bulkjes were routinely transferred to staging bases in Albania and Bulgaria, as well as Yugoslavia, from which they penetrated the Greek frontier (SD/S/203). Regular courier services were maintained across the frontiers and into Greece, and on at least one occasion a Bulgarian military convoy ferried munitions into Greece. When pursued by Greek National Army forces, the guerrillas freely fled back across the frontier, often supported by covering fire from the border outposts on the other side. What is more, the Greek complaint to the UN alleged that the Yugoslavs and Bulgars actually exercised tactical command over, or at the least maintained very close liaison with, ELAS and NOR guerrilla operations in the field. Prisoners under interrogation routinely spoke of foreign officers accompanying their raiding parties as far as the border, and occasionally beyond. Indeed, a second lieutenant in the Yugoslav army was actually killed during an NOF raid on Mount Paikon in late August 1946 (SD/S/203).

Some Conclusions

To a certain degree, the analysts of the U.S. State Department relied directly on the reports of the Greek government in forming their perception of the situation along Greece's northern frontier in the winter of 1946-47. Indeed, this same appreciation of the escalating conflict in Greece constituted the basis of the scenario that President Truman presented to the Congress and the people on March 12, 1947. The Greek government complained—and adduced supporting evidence—that Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, aided by Albania, were waging a campaign to cleave Aegean Macedonia from Greece. Further, this campaign was not one of open warfare, but instead took the form of a program of covert support for an insurrection of Greek nationals. The most visible element in the insurrection was the DSE—the old ELAS—under the effective political control of the KKE. Indeed, as events proved, the KKE erected an elaborate command and

control structure to support the guerrillas, although it kept its support for the DSE something of a secret until the summer of 1947 (DRE-OIR, *IR 1175.170*). Less visible, but perhaps more important in the plans of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, was the NOF, which was fighting directly for Macedonian union.

The relations between the KKE and the NOF remained problematic in the eyes of American analysts until January 1948, when the NOF joined the provisional governing coalition dominated by the KKE (Jones 72). But these political nuances seem to have had little impact on the reality of guerrilla efforts in the field. American analysts noted that the ELAS/DSE and NOF bands operating out of Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania shared many of the same facilities, and not infrequently conducted well-coordinated movements and combat operations (*SD/S/203; IR 1175.170*). The coordinating agency in nearly all of these cases was either the Yugoslav or Bulgarian army. Such evidence served to stress that a principal source of direction for this insurrection emanated from the communist Balkan states rather than the Greek communist party.

Nonetheless, State Department analysts were careful not to exaggerate this picture of the insurrection. From the summer of 1946 to the summer of 1947, these analysts discounted the Greek government's claims of significant external intervention in the brewing insurrection. As late as May 1947—nearly two months after the promulgation of the Truman Doctrine—an assessment of the situation in the Balkans concluded that:

the Yugoslav Government undoubtedly still hopes eventually to gain possession of Greek Macedonia... Despite continued Greek charges of border violations by Yugoslavia, there appears to be little justification for the belief that aid to Greek partisans on a larger scale is to be expected for the present (DRE-OIR, *IR 1175.166 14*).

That is to say, until the events of late 1947 changed the situation dramatically, the guerrilla war in northern Greece remained, in the eyes of State Department research specialists, a localized and relatively minor border conflict with a long history behind it.

NOTES

¹Unless otherwise noted, all citations refer to documents prepared by the U.S. Department of State. Documents written by the State Department's Division of Research for Europe, Office of Intelligence and Research, are cited by the abbreviation DRE-OIR. Many of the documents utilized in researching this paper are housed among the papers of Charles G. Lagoudakis, a foreign affairs specialist posted to the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and later to the Greek desk of the State Department, DRE-OIR. The collected Lagoudakis Papers are deposited at Mugar Library, Boston University (hereafter cited as CLP).

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